

ANCIENT WORSHIP:

Selections from The Iliad, Chapter One

During the Trojan war, the Greeks raid a temple of Apollo and Agamemnon kidnaps the priest Chryses's daughter. Chryses offers Agamemnon many riches for the return of his daughter, but Agamemnon refuses and threatens Chryses instead, telling him never to return to the Greek camp...

The old man [Chryses] feared him and obeyed. Not a word he spoke, but went by the shore of the sounding sea and prayed apart to King Apollo whom lovely Leto had borne. "Hear me," he cried, "Oh god of the silver bow, that protects Chryse and holy Cilla and rules Tenedos with your might, hear me oh you of Sminthe. If I have ever decked your temple with garlands, or burned thigh bones in fat of bulls or goats to you, grant my prayer, and let your arrows avenge my tears upon the Danaans."

Thus did he pray, and Apollo heard his prayer. He came down furious from the summits of Olympus, with his bow and his quiver upon his shoulder, and the arrows rattled on his back with the rage that trembled within him. He sat himself down away from the ships with a face as dark as night, and his silver bow rang death as he shot his arrows in the midst of them. First he struck down their mules and their hounds, but presently he aimed his shafts at the people themselves, and all day long the pyres of the dead were burning.

Achilles seeks the advice of a priest for why Apollo has cursed the Greeks with plague and what they can do to regain his favor. The priest tells Achilles that Apollo will not be satisfied until Chryseis is returned to her father and a hecatomb (100 cattle) is sacrificed. Odysseus is ordered to take her home by ship along with the offering for Apollo.

They then got out upon the seashore and landed the hecatomb for Apollo; Chryseis also left the ship, and Odysseus led her to the altar to deliver her into the hands of her father. "Chryses," said he, "King Agamemnon has sent me to bring you back your child, and to offer sacrifice to Apollo on behalf of the Danaans, that we may make peace with the god, who has now brought sorrow upon the Argives."

So saying he gave the girl over to her father, who received her gladly, and they arranged the holy hecatomb all orderly around the altar of the god. They washed their hands and took up the barley meal to sprinkle over the cattle, while Chryses lifted up his hands and prayed aloud on their behalf. "Hear me," he cried, "Oh god of the silver bow, that protects Chryse and holy Cilla, and rules Tenedos with your might. Even as you heard me before when I prayed, and pressed hard upon the Achaeans, so hear me yet again, and remove this fearful plague from the Danaans." Thus did he pray, and Apollo heard his prayer...

After the sacrifice to Apollo is complete, the men eat the smoked meat and drink wine. The young men worship the god by singing hymns and chanting praises and "the god took pleasure in their voices." The Greeks return to their camp to find the plague has been removed by a pleased Apollo.

CHARACTERS:

APOLLO— son of Zeus and Leto, god of the sun, healing, music, poetry

ACHILLES— son of Peleus and Thetis, greatest Greek hero of Trojan war

AGAMEMNON— son of Atreus and brother of Menelaus, who's wife Helen's kidnapping started the Trojan war, a king of Mycenae (Sparta)

CHRYSES— Trojan priest of Apollo

CHRYSEIS— daughter of Chryses

DANAANS, ARGIVES, ACHAEANS— tribes of ancient Greece